



# *A LEADERSHIP COACH'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE*

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I've had the great honor of being a leadership coach for the past 25 years. In the course of this work, I've had the opportunity to reflect on some of the most profound questions of morality, ethics, and values.

Through this reflection, I've come to learn that there are four critical principles that are timeless and universal and that should be touchstones for all our work as coaches.

1. Life is a gift and comes with the inescapable responsibility to live it well, regardless of your particular perspective or belief system. The pursuit of happiness, adventure, learning, love, worship, contribution, and so on is not optional—it is the essential purpose of our existence. Throughout the coaching process, the commitment to living life well needs to form the backdrop of all conversations.
2. The pursuit of happiness described in the first principle cannot come at the expense of others. We need to pursue our own best lives while not depriving others of the opportunity to do the same. The often conflicting demands of #1 and #2 are the source of many of the dilemmas that are explored in coaching conversations.
3. Coaching, at its core, is an act of faith in others. It is not about changing or fixing others. It is about helping others to become fully functional in their work and life. It is about establishing relationships and engaging in conversations that help others see the best parts of themselves and the world around them and shifting onto the most promising pathway as they go forward.
4. Life only has meaning when it is used to help others achieve #1. Each of us has an unwritten social contract with others to not only do no harm but also help them accelerate their own pursuits. We, as humans, exist only in relationship to others. Our existence is interdependent and interconnected. In every major spiritual and religious tradition—from Christianity to Buddhism to Sikhism to Islam to Hinduism—we find variations on the theme "Life only has real purpose when spent in service of others." This truth has been enshrined in art, religion, and philosophies throughout history. In fact, true leadership is the ultimate act of service. The best leaders see their role as a calling—a calling to create a better future for their teams, their colleagues, their customers, their communities, and their families.

Leadership coaching can only have a sustained, positive outcome when both the coach and the person being coached embrace these principles. Of course, coaches cannot force others to subscribe to their belief system, but they can share it clearly and persuasively.

They can demonstrate their own commitment to them. They can be exemplars of the core values on which these are based. They can help those they coach identify their most noble values and encourage them to explore how they can enhance their work, career and life, and sense of self-worth by actively pursuing these.

Recognizing that being a force for good is a choice, at the close of his first inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln encouraged all Americans to be “the better angels of our nature.” Leadership coaching is not values-neutral. The great coach operates from the premise that humans do better in life not just when they win but also when they have a positive impact on the lives of others—and this belief is infectious. The leadership coach brings this bias into the conversation and challenges those he or she coaches to strive to become their “better angels.”

The good news is that these four principles are within the reach of all of us. They are not the exclusive domain of the Mahatma Gandhis and Mother Therasas of the world. Instead, they serve as a powerful guidance system for every coach seeking to do work that really matters.



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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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